

Senator Handley and Representative Sayers:

Good morning. My name is Geoff Bishop, and I reside at 2 Boulder Drive in Old Saybrook. I am employed part time at Stop and Shop in Old Saybrook, and am a member of the UFCW Local 371. My wife is also employed at Stop and Shop part time, and is also a union member. We both work over 30 hours a week, and would love nothing more than to be able to work full time. Stop and Shop rarely hires full time workers anymore.

I have worked at Stop and Shop since March of 2005. At the time I was hired, I was told that I would have to wait two years until I became eligible for health insurance.

I have a six year old daughter. We considered HUSKY for her, but were discouraged by some of my coworkers who said that very few providers in our area even accept HUSKY. In fact, one of my coworkers at Stop and Shop told me that she waits as long as she possibly can, sometimes until she gets into the doctor's office, to tell the provider that she has HUSKY, for fear that they won't treat her child. So we decided to purchase a catastrophic plan for my daughter, for \$55.00 per year, through her elementary school, and to pay for her routine physicals and care out of pocket, so that she could continue to see her pediatrician that she is used to. We paid \$250.00 for her physical to get into kindergarten.

My wife continues to not have health insurance. She is from the Philippines, and she delivered our daughter there, by c section, for a total of \$1500.00 U.S. dollars. That was the last time she received medical treatment.

I have gout, and have dealt with it for 15 years. I was diagnosed while working in the Philippines, and have taken a maintenance drug ever since to keep my symptoms suppressed. That drug is generic, and is relatively inexpensive, about \$20.00 for a 3 month supply. Since I don't have health insurance, I cannot afford to go to the doctor to have him prescribe the drug for me. Luckily, I have a friend in the medical field who continues to write the prescription for me.

It was only in our last round of contract negotiations that it was decided that part time employees would have to wait 2 years before receiving health insurance coverage. About a year ago, I was feeling ill. I tried to call in sick, and Stop and Shop told me that they were really short staffed and that they needed me to come in. I forced myself to go to work for two more days, which led me to get sicker. I finally had no choice but to go to Middlesex Hospital's ER. I thought I would just be told that I had a sinus infection, they would write me a script for an antibiotic, and I would be on my way. However, that was not the case. I had to have two sets of x rays, lab tests, and visits by two ER doctors. The total bill when I received it was \$800.00.

Since I knew I would never be able to afford to pay \$800.00, I appealed to the hospital for financial aid. Between the requests for explanations, tax forms, bank statements, and pay stubs, the process was very intimidating. I was even asked to submit the entire set of information over again, when the hospital claimed they lost the forms. I can imagine many people would just give up on the process. Eventually, they told me I would not be responsible for the \$800.00 charges. However, I know that the taxpayers are the ones who ended up paying for my hospital visit, and for the secretary who handled all of my paperwork.

Our contract with Stop and Shop expires in 2 weeks. We are currently in very heated contract negotiations, with Stop and Shop looking, I believe, to eliminate health insurance in its entirety for part time workers. That means that the company will take advantage of the situation by continuing to only hire part time workers. If a single payer system is put into place in Connecticut, it is likely that it will cost less for Stop and Shop to pay for insurance for all of its employees than what it is paying now for only some of its employees. If we fix this state's broken healthcare system, it is my hope that Stop and Shop will have the opportunity to improve upon wages and other benefits for its employees, and perhaps, continue to grow in the state.

Thank you for your time.